

# CLAVERTON PARISH COUNCIL

**Date:** 10<sup>th</sup> September 2011  
**Our ref:**  
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Reply to:

**Cllr David Batho**  
**Chairman**  
Holly Cottage  
Claverton Village  
Bath  
BA2 7BG

Kelvin Packer  
Bath and North East Somerset Council  
Service Manager - Highways & Parking  
Floor 2 Riverside  
Temple Street  
Keynsham  
Bristol BS31 1LA

Dear Kelvin,

## **Re: Winter Service Plan - The Avenue & Claverton Hill**

Following Cllr Mark Mackintosh's correspondence with you regarding the Winter Service Plan, and ahead of the Cabinet meeting on 14<sup>th</sup> September, we have prepared this letter setting out the reasons why we consider there to be a need to include Claverton Hill as a designated gritting route.

This is a serious safety issue for both Claverton Parish and the wider B&NES community.

Claverton Hill is not currently on the B&NES' gritting routes, presumably because the road does not appear to meet the necessary criteria. We believe, however, that there are exceptional reasons for its inclusion, rooted in experience in recent years, especially last winter when there were prolonged periods of ice and lying snow.

## **CLAVERTON HILL**

At various points the hill is steep - in particular above the entrance to the American Museum; the long straight stretch below that entrance; and the bends about 200-300 yards above the village. Moreover, the hill is deceptive: those unfamiliar with it, especially its bends, can quickly run in to danger in icy conditions, as was evident last winter.

## **EXPERIENCE IN THE WINTER OF 2010/11**

I'd like to present five examples drawn from last winter to illustrate our concerns:

1. An RSPCA officer attempting to get on to the A36 after visiting the Cats and Dogs Home was sliding dangerously on the final bend before the straight quarter mile stretch down to the A36. She was terrified and distraught. If she had lost control of her van on that straight stretch, she could have slid down to the A36 where the likelihood of being hit by fast moving traffic on the A36 would have been very high: if not, she would have gone in to a deep ditch adjacent to the eastern carriageway. (The A36 itself had been gritted and was operating normally.) It took a resident, who was by chance walking up the road from the village, an hour to help her edge down the hill by turning her wheels into the soft verge every five yards or so, and then taking the next five yards and so on.)
2. A tradesman working at the American Museum lost control of his vehicle and went through a thick, well-established, stock-proof hedge on one of the bends. The vehicle overturned and was lying in the field. He was badly shaken and fortunate to escape without major injuries.

3. A terrified driver descending the hill just below the American Museum managed to stop her car which was nearly out of control. She called the police for help. A police officer arrived, parked his car just below the entrance to the American Museum and went to talk to the driver. As he did so, his parked vehicle slid down the hill and ended up half in the ditch on the right and half blocking the road.
4. That evening, a PCSO arrived in a car to assess the position concerning the abandoned police car. His car was then stuck further down the hill. A resident spent over an hour, at midnight, helping him down the hill. A specially designed police vehicle had to be brought out a day or two later to remove the first police car which was partially blocking the hill (to the extent that any emergency vehicle could not have passed). We recognise that the B&NES budget and the police budget are different, but to the Council Tax payer all the money comes from the public purse.
5. A (small) coach with a party of older people from Dorset, who were visiting the American Museum, lost control on the hill and slid into the verge while attempting to get through the Museum's main gate. The damaged vehicle had to be abandoned and alternative transport sourced locally to get the people home.

### **SPECIAL FEATURES**

The hill has a number of special features which warrant consideration in this matter:

1. Approximately a quarter of all Bath University traffic uses Claverton Hill. Even in the Christmas vacation, which is in any case only four weeks, there is still a considerable amount of university traffic both because the university's infrastructure has to be maintained and because of conference and other winter vacation business.

The University has expressed concern about the hill and at a recent Residents' Forum stated their support for any initiative to get the hill included as a designated gritting route.

2. The Cats and Dogs Home receives a substantial number of car-borne visitors, especially around Christmas. This includes members of the public who regularly walk the Home's dogs in the area.
3. The American Museum is closed to visitors during the winter months, except for three busy weeks before Christmas. During this time, the Museum heavily promotes the museum and its grounds, and in particular its Christmas shop. Given the location of the Museum, nearly all its visitors, many of whom are elderly, arrive by car. Moreover, closure of the Museum for most of the winter months provides it with the opportunity for implementation of maintenance programmes often involving external contractors and their lorries and vans.

It should be noted that, in response to a request from the Museum's Deputy Director, Claverton Hill was gritted by B&NES on one occasion last winter. The Museum was expecting a large number of visitors for a particular event.

### **OTHER ISSUES**

The other issues that should be considered are as follows:

1. Many of the visitors to the American Museum, the Cats and Dogs Home (and indeed the University) are unfamiliar with how treacherous Claverton Hill can be in icy conditions.
2. If Claverton Hill is unpassable and/or closed, more traffic has to go on to Brassknocker Hill. We know that that hill is on the gritting route; nonetheless, it is potentially dangerous in icy weather, especially the very severe bends at the top, and could presumably do without the extra pressure of accommodating displaced Claverton Hill traffic. If gritted, Claverton Hill is fairly safe, provided there is clear signage urging caution.

A map of the eastern side of Bath, highlighting traffic movements on Claverton Hill, is attached (Figure1).

## **CONCLUSION**

As explained, Claverton Hill has a great deal of traffic; and it is traffic of different kinds. Many drivers have limited or no knowledge of the hill in ice and snow. It is, in fact, an important artery on the eastern side of Bath, particularly in relation to Bath University, the American Museum and the Cats and Dogs Home. The sample of incidents quoted above underscores the danger: it was sheer luck that nobody was seriously hurt last winter.

We are clear that the arguments for including Claverton Hill on the gritting route are decisive. We ask B&NES to take this request seriously. Obviously, it makes no sense to grit Claverton Hill without also gritting The Avenue. Claverton Hill and The Avenue comprise a single stretch of road linking the eastern side of Bath to the A36 at the point at which it runs through Claverton village.

**Claverton Parish Council therefore requests B&NES to include The Avenue and Claverton Hill on the gritting routes.**

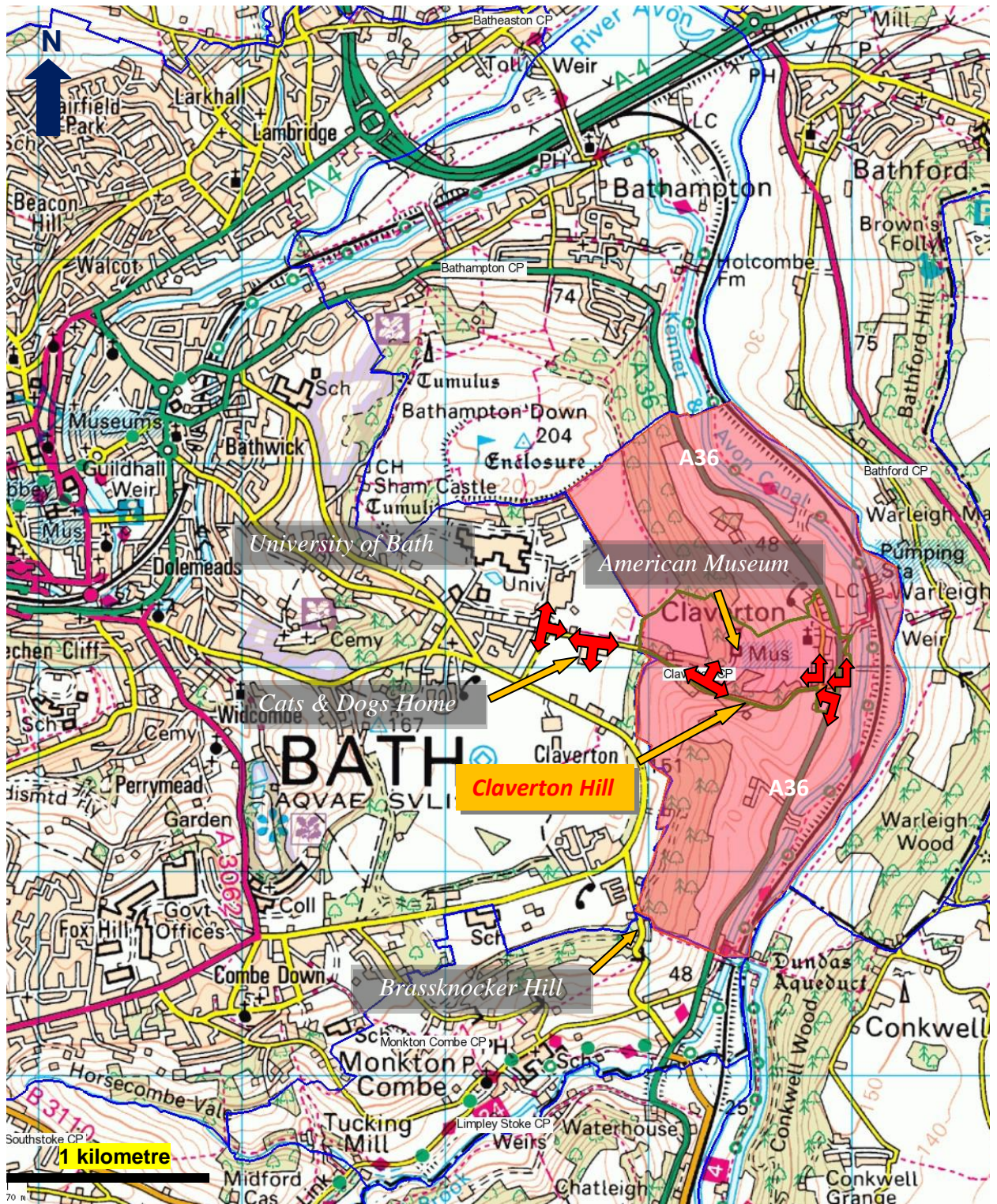
I should appreciate a written or e-mailed acknowledgement of this letter by return; and a substantive reply within ten working days. I should be glad to discuss our request with you in the next few days either face to face or on the telephone if that would be helpful.

Yours sincerely,

David Batho

Cc: Cllr Roger Symonds (Cabinet Member for Transport)

**Figure 1: Claverton Hill Traffic Movements**



 Traffic Movements

Figure 1 - Claverton Hill Traffic Movements